"This is where it all started. This is the moment where I fell in love with jazz. Listen to that! See the tune is just the starting point, y'get me? The music is just an excuse to bring out the YOU."

~Joe Gardner, "Soul"

PRODUCTION NOTES

What is it that makes you...YOU? Pixar Animation Studios' all-new feature film "Soul" introduces Joe Gardner (voice of Jamie Foxx) – a middle-school band teacher who has a passion for jazz. "Joe wants more than anything to become a professional jazz pianist," says director Pete Docter. "So when he's offered a rare, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play with one of the greats, Joe feels he's reached the top of the ultimate mountain."

But one small misstep takes him from the streets of New York City to The Great Before – a fantastical place where new souls get their personalities, quirks and interests before they go to Earth. According to Docter, the idea for this unique world was 23 years in the making. "It started with my son—he's 23 now—but the instant he was born, he already had a personality," says Docter. "Where did that come from? I thought your personality developed through your interaction with the world. And yet, it was pretty clear that we're all born with a very unique, specific sense of who we are.

"In our story, everyone is born with a soul," continues Docter. "And those souls don't just show up unprepared, they're trained and given personality and interests."

Joe Gardner, however, doesn't feel like he belongs in this land of new souls. Determined to return to his life, he teams up with a precocious soul, 22 (voice of Tina Fey), who has never understood the appeal of the human experience. "Sometimes souls have a little bit of trouble finding that special spark to earn their way to Earth," says co-director Kemp Powers. "The Counselors at The Great Before call on mentors to help inspire these souls—extraordinary people in history like Abraham Lincoln. And

that's worked for every single soul except 22, who's a bit like a petulant pre-teen. And she definitely, without a doubt, has no desire to go to Earth."

Joe inadvertently becomes 22's next mentor, and he figures if he can help her, maybe he can make it back to Earth in time for his big gig. "He thinks that all he has to do is help her find her spark—that thing that makes life worth living," says producer Dana Murray. "He thinks it's easy. It's like loving jazz, which seems so obvious to him."

But as Joe desperately tries to show 22 what's great about living, he may just discover the answers to questions he never even thought of asking about his own life. Says head of story Kristen Lester, "What makes a meaningful life?' Is it about the relationships you have? Is it about being present? You can have a great conversation, then a great cup of coffee—do those things together become meaningful? Our story doesn't really land hard in one camp: relationships, family—there's a sense that it's all of it."

Co-screenwriter Mike Jones agrees. "I think no matter where we are or how far we've come, we sometimes wonder about greener grass. We're always pushing. There's always that drive in an artist to create something, to never be satisfied."

Docter recognizes the idea in his own life. "I've been so lucky to work with some incredible people and make movies that have been seen around the world," he says. "But I realized that as wonderful as these projects are, there's more to living than a singular passion—as expressive and fulfilling as that may be. Sometimes the small insignificant things are what it's really about.

"I remember one day I was biking and I stopped and picked a raspberry," he continues. "It was warmed by the sun and became the most amazing raspberry I ever had. I still remember that nearly-nothing moment vividly. Almost any moment in our lives could be a transcendental moment that defines why we're here. This film is about broadening the idea of a singular focus to thinking more widely about what life has to offer and what we have to offer life."

Set in the fast-paced and jazz-centric New York City and the abstract illusionary world of The Great Before, "Soul" capitalizes on the contrasts between the big city and the cosmic realm. Filmmakers' approach to the film and the characters' performances was inspired in part by two diverse influences: the art of English artist and satirical cartoonist Ronald Searle, and the animation from Disney's 1961 animated classic "101 Dalmatians." Says animation supervisor Jude Brownbill, "Searle and '101 Dalmatians' influenced the look and feel of 'Soul' in almost every department—from the imperfect shape of buildings, furniture and props, to the number of folds on a characters' clothing. For animation, Searle's influence inspired bold and direct posing within clear compositions that lead the viewer's eye through the scene. Studying '101 Dalmatians' reinforced the importance of laying out one acting idea at a time and holding within key poses to allow important moments to be read more clearly."

Complementing those visual choices is a two-pronged approach to the music. “GRAMMY®-nominated Jon Batiste—singer, composer, songwriter, band leader, jazz genius—is producing the jazz, which amplifies the gritty, beautiful New York City-side of the film,” says Murray. “When you see Joe’s hands playing in the film, that’s Jon’s playing. Our animators studied reference footage of Jon at the piano to capture details of how he plays—everything from how his fingers move to the breaths he takes.

“Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross from Nine Inch Nails took on all the music from the ‘Soul’ world,” Murray continues. “It’s so ethereal. The contrast they bring is really exciting. It’s an unexpected choice for Pixar—this is like nothing we’ve ever done before. I love the combination we have.”

Jamie Foxx (“Just Mercy,” “Project Power”), who won an Oscar® and Golden Globe® for his performance in 2004’s “Ray,” lends his voice to Joe Gardner. New soul 22 is voiced by award-winning writer, producer, author and actor Tina Fey. Five-time BAFTA winner Graham Norton (“The Graham Norton Show”) lends his voice to spiritual sign twirler Moonwind, and Rachel House (“Hunt for the Wilderpeople,” “Thor: Ragnarok”) voices the count-obsessed Terry.

The film also features the voices Phylicia Rashad (“This Is Us,” “A Fall from Grace”) as Joe’s pragmatic mom Libba, comedian Donnell Rawlings as Joe’s barber Dez, Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson (musical director for “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon,” The Roots) as Joe’s former student Curley, Angela Bassett (“Avengers: Endgame,” “Black Panther”) as jazz legend Dorothea Williams, and Daveed Diggs (“Hamilton,” “Blindspotting”) as neighborhood cynic Paul. Alice Braga (“Elysium”), Richard Ayoade (“The Mandalorian”), Wes Studi (“Woke,” “The Last of the Mohicans”), Fortune Feimster (“Bless the Harts”) and Zenobia Shroff (“The Affair”) provide the voices of the counselors. June Squibb (“Nebraska”) lends her voice to Gerel, a 106-year-old heading to The Great Beyond.

Academy Award® winner Pete Docter (“Inside Out,” “Up”) helms “Soul,” and Academy Award nominee Dana Murray, p.g.a. (Pixar short “Lou”) produces. Kemp Powers (“One Night in Miami”) co-directs the film, with a story and screenplay by Docter, Mike Jones and Powers. Dan Scanlon and Kiri Hart are executive producers. Jazz compositions & arrangements are by globally renowned musician and GRAMMY® nominee Jon Batiste and Oscar® winners Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross (“The Social Network”) composed an original score.

“You want these characters to be as authentic and real as possible,” says Docter. “I’m an amateur musician, and I do really relate to Joe, but I’m not African American. I didn’t grow up in that culture. Having Kemp on board was a huge help in that regard, and the cultural consultants and musicians we’ve worked with brought us so much knowledge—we wouldn’t have been able to make the film without their help and support.” Cultural and music consultants include Dr. Peter Archer, Jon Batiste, Dr. Christopher Bell, Terri Lyne Carrington, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Daveed Diggs, Herbie Hancock, Marcus McLaurine, George Spencer, Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson and Bradford Young.

Rated PG, Disney and Pixar's "Soul" will be available exclusively on Disney+ on Dec. 25, 2020.

WHAT MAKES YOU, YOU?
"Soul" Features Dynamic Cast of Characters

Disney and Pixar's "Soul" travels between New York City, with its dynamic, diverse and complex populace, and The Great Before, which features an ethereal array of inhabitants that sprung from the imaginations of the artists and technicians at Pixar Animation Studios. The dichotomy creates a rich tapestry of characters who are uniquely connected and yet worlds apart.

"Soul" also marks the first film at Pixar to feature a host of characters with black and brown skin. Filmmakers took special care to ensure all skin types were richly and authentically depicted. "I'm really conscious about skin tone," says shading art director Bryn Imagire. "We wanted to represent a wide range in the African American characters. It was important to me to get that right."

Filmmakers did extensive research, including consulting with acclaimed cinematographer Bradford Young, who was nominated for an Oscar® for his work on 2016's "Arrival." "I think I made more philosophical contributions than actual physical production contributions," says Young. "The team was already so far ahead in terms of the visual texture. I just encouraged folks to be mindful of things that might resonate slightly better or offer advice on how to make it more robust, more three-dimensional. It was already quite good."

The roster of characters in "Soul" features talented musicians, a strong mother, new souls, camp counselors and a therapy cat, among others—all ushering Joe Gardner to the kind of life-changing self-awareness he never saw coming.

"Today started out as the best day of my life..."
JOE GARDNER is a middle-school band teacher whose true passion is playing jazz, and he's good. He dreams of playing piano professionally and has long been waiting for his big break. "He keeps his dream alive—barely: the ember is still glowing, but he has to supplement his income as a teacher," says director Pete Docter. "He always assumed that would be temporary until he landed a full-time gig."

Co-screenwriter Mike Jones says when we meet Joe, he finds himself at a crossroads he's been avoiding for a long time. "His principal tells him funds have been allocated for a full-time job—which is like a death certificate to Joe. 'I'm going to get a pension now and die having never fulfilled my true-life purpose.'"

Kristen Lester, head of story, points out that Joe's journey is not unlike many of the people at Pixar. "I come from an artistic background," she says, "I have a passion for

art, so I related to Joe's singular drive—his singular focus. He thinks if he's not doing the one thing he's set his sights on, then he's not worth anything."

Filmmakers wanted to illustrate Joe's internal struggles in his look. Animation supervisor Bobby Podesta says he found inspiration in director Pete Docter. "If you watch Pete act out something with Joe, you realize that they're probably the same size proportion with long limbs moving in all directions at times."

Animator Frank Abney says the team was also inspired by jazz pianist Jon Batiste. "Joe has this lanky build and these long fingers, and we pulled some of those attributes from Jon," says Abney. "We also looked at Roger from '101 Dalmatians,' who has a similar build. When Roger or Joe sit at the piano and play, sometimes those spaces can seem a little too small."

But once Joe is playing—once he gets lost in the music—it's as if he's come home. These moments were so important, filmmakers ensured that every note played was authentic. Says animation supervisor Jude Brownbill, "Recreating the whirlwind of Jon Batiste's fingers on the keys required multiple camera set-ups to capture live reference footage, and new technology to light up the keys on our piano rig based on the music Jon performed. We wanted to make sure that every note Joe plays on screen is the same note Jon played in the studio."

Batiste also gave animators an idea of what it looks like to play with such joy. "I would perform and do my thing and they masterfully captured me," he says. "Seeing how Joe embodies it all is quite astonishing. These folks are geniuses!"

Jamie Foxx, who lends his voice to Joe, could relate to the character's joy in performing. "His dream is to one day play with [jazz legend] Dorothea Williams. It's like a basketball player who wants to play in The Garden. I was born with a similar spark—I came out singing and telling jokes."

Docter agrees with the actor. "Jamie Foxx never stops," says the director. "He's such a go-getter, and we wanted that for Joe as well. Like Jamie, Joe's not a guy who's just going to give up. He continues to push for his dreams."

"I just want to be remembered for the joy, man," says Foxx. "I had to do a career day for my daughter. I introduced myself as the Deliverer of Sunshine. I create the smiles and give the joy."

Likewise, Joe's dedication to his dream is steadfast—he lives alone in his Queens apartment, immersing himself in his music, and when he does venture out, he spends most of his time talking about jazz. But just when it looks like his dream will come true, everything changes. "He falls into a manhole," says producer Dana Murray, "but he decides he's not done with life yet—especially not now. So, he manages to go through multiple realms, ultimately landing in The Great Before."

Joe finds himself on an eye-opening journey he hadn't counted on, charged with showing a new soul why life is worth living, and thinking he has all the answers. His look changes, of course, when he's in the soul world—but filmmakers wanted to maintain the essence of Joe. Like the other mentors, Joe's soul-world design features identifiable characteristics they had on Earth. Says Brownbill, "Though they are very different in size and shape, there's a visual connection between Soul Joe and human Joe—not only in the proportions of the face and his iconic hat and glasses combination, but also in the broadness of his gestures and the specificity of his mannerisms that were heavily inspired by Jamie Foxx. We wanted audiences to believe they were the same character even though they appeared in two different forms."

But Joe's time in The Great Before is temporary. He and 22 find their way back to Earth in a rather unconventional way, marking the real beginning of their adventure together. According to co-director Kemp Powers, while Joe has a lot to learn, he isn't the only one. "Joe Gardner is all of us," says Powers. "I think anyone can empathize with this idea of questioning whether they're doing what they're meant to be doing. At what point do I give up on this thing I've been pursuing for so long?"

The lesson, it turns out, might not be about realizing one's dream after all. "We didn't want to put a movie out there that made people feel like they were supposed to have a specific, grand purpose," says Murray. "This film is for everyone; everyone can connect to it."

"I don't wanna go to Earth."

22 is a precocious soul who has spent hundreds of years at The You Seminar, where new souls must meet several requirements before going to Earth. Like every soul before her, 22 has been through the Personality Pavilions, which explains her endearing sarcasm, quick wit and occasional moodiness. She's met every requirement to go to Earth—except one. But no matter how many visits she makes to the Hall of Everything, no matter how many esteemed luminaries have mentored her, she can't find the spark she needs to fulfill her requirements and make her way to Earth. That's fine with 22; the truth is—she's not interested in life on Earth at all. Can Joe convince her otherwise?

"22 has had an impressive list of mentors—from Archimedes to Gandhi," says Docter. "And Joe is just a regular guy from Queens. Instead of rolling out the usual list of amazing achievements, all he can show her are a few miserable moments in the classroom and a lot of failed auditions. But 22 is intrigued. For every person who feels like they were born to do something, there's someone who feels like they don't really know what they're supposed to do."

According to producer Dana Murray, 22 struggles with more than she lets on. "Seeing all the other souls leaving her for Earth, I think deep down she's thinks she's broken," says Murray. "She tries to be cynical and make fun of it, but she's scared."

Tina Fey, who lends her voice to 22, thinks that fear is what makes 22 so appealing. “I think the ways in which she’s cynical and the things that she’s scared of are really relatable,” says Fey. “Life is scary at times, and life hurts. Everyone has those moments of ‘It’s too much!’”

Docter appreciated Fey’s intuitive understanding of the character. “Tina Fey is amazingly intelligent and hilarious,” he says. “I always have the sense that she’s 15 steps ahead of me, she’s so quick and sharp. Her brand of humor takes 22 to the next level.”

The character design began with a similar look to the rest of the new souls in The Great Before. Says shading art director Bryn Imagire, “We looked at refraction, prisms—those kinds of ideas—to apply to the soul characters. There’s a gradation across their whole bodies that suggests the idea of light going through a translucent object and dispersing in it.”

All new souls, 22 included, look similar since their personalities are just being formed. To differentiate the main character, artists gave 22 half-lidded, unimpressed eyes and two buckteeth. According to character supervisor Junyi Ling, it was also important that 22 be able to clearly emote, which was a challenge with the volumetric character. “Where normally we would have surface shading, which makes things feel more tactile, the volumes that make up the new souls are thin, so facial features are harder to read,” says Ling. “Artists and technicians worked together to transfer geometric information from the surface into the volume, which is unusual, so we’re able to read mouth and lips, even though they’re transparent.”

Animators found fun and unique ways to showcase the character’s personality. Says animation supervisor Jude Brownbill, “New souls don’t have arms and legs—but we imagined that 22 has been there for so long that after so many years and so many mentors, she’s learned how to turn on legs or arms when she wants. She can have little mitten hands, or if she wants to point, she can create digits. But she’s also lazy and insecure, so when she doesn’t want those extra limbs, she brings them back and hides them.”

While the story is about Joe’s journey of self-discovery, executive producer Kiri Hart says 22’s journey to Earth might transform the cynical new soul, too. “One of the things that’s special about the movie is that 22 gets the opportunity through an unusual set of circumstances to temporarily live on Earth and get a sense of what that’s like,” Hart says. “She realizes it’s not at all like what she expected.”

“Does this gig have a pension?”

LIBBA GARDNER is Joe’s mother, his biggest fan, and his kind-hearted truth-teller. She is a proud businesswoman who’s owned a successful tailor shop in Queens for decades. Her late husband, Joe’s father, was a struggling musician, so Libba was the primary breadwinner for the family. She knows that life as a musician can be brutal, so

she encourages Joe to have a backup plan, which he interprets as a lack of support. But no matter how pragmatic Libba can be, above all, she loves Joe and wants him to be happy.

“Libba doesn’t want to see Joe struggle the way his father did,” says co-director Kemp Powers. “I can relate as a parent. We all want to support our kids’ hopes and dreams, but that can bump up against this underlying desire for them to be OK when we’re no longer around.”

“Libba just wants the best for Joe,” adds Murray. “Phylicia Rashad is really perfect as the voice of Libba. She’s strong but comforting.”

According to Rashad, the filmmakers encouraged her to make the character her own. “Working with [Pixar] was really amazing—it was very organic and very collaborative,” she says. “There was a quality that they wanted to hear in the voice, and I was free to find it. I’ve always wanted to voice a character in an animated feature. This is my first. I really enjoyed it.”

According to animation supervisor Jude Brownbill, animators turned to Rashad’s performance to help define the character. “Phylicia Rashad brought something special to the character—Libba has a lot of energy, especially when she’s trying to convince Joe to accept life as a teacher and embrace that stability.”

Libba is an example of the strong female characters in “Soul,” and filmmakers wanted to represent these powerful women in a way that rang true. They turned to Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole for guidance. “We spent a lot of time talking about the portrayal of Black women,” says Dr. Cole. “It was important to me that these women—Libba, Dorothea—were in no way portrayed in stereotypical ways.”

Some filmmakers, it turned out, likened Libba to Dr. Cole, who understands the comparison. “I relate deeply to Libba in many ways,” says Dr. Cole. “She is both strong and soulful. And while she is protective of her son, she ultimately accepts that he must follow his passion.”

The artists behind the character design wanted to ensure Libba appeared strong and confident. Additionally, her costuming was important because the character owns a tailoring shop. Shading art director Bryn Imagire wanted Libba’s clothing to look like high-quality garments. “You’ll notice that Libba’s costumes all have this amazing woven texture,” says Imagire. “We used this technique that actually weaves fibers to form the fabric within the computer.”

Filmmakers also chose powerful colors for Libba’s wardrobe. “We liked her in really saturated colors,” says Imagire. “I love to use analogous colors like magenta and coral. It’s subtle, but helps convey her strong personality.”

"Get on up here, Teach. We ain't got all day."

DOROTHEA WILLIAMS is a world-renowned jazz legend who's earned her place among the greats. Confident, strong and poised, she is also truly talented when it comes to her saxophone playing. Dorothea exudes pure confidence on stage and suffers no fools when it comes to jazz or life. Her band is her family, and joining that family is an honor she's willing to extend to very few. It's not easy to impress Dorothea, but it's worth trying.

"Dorothea is very thoughtful and intentional about who she wants in her group," says executive producer Kiri Hart. "I think Joe has admired her from a distance, so it's a very big deal to him to get the opportunity to play with her."

According to director Pete Docter, filmmakers needed someone who could convey Dorothea's command of a room, but with undeniable likability. Angela Bassett fit the bill. "Angela has such strength," says Docter. "She walks into the room, and you feel it. When she speaks, you listen. We've been able to draw from her strength and put that in the character."

Animators showcased Dorothea's confidence in an unexpected way—by limiting her movement. "They did an amazing job of keeping her so still and powerful in her posture, in how little she blinks or makes eye contact—it comes across as intimidating," says animation supervisor Jude Brownbill, who adds that such restraint can be difficult. "You want to move characters around. You want to have fun and make new poses. For Dorothea, we had to strip a lot out—remove a blink or expression change—because the power comes from her not moving."

Bassett, whose powerful performance underscored Dorothea's love of jazz, was inspired by the story. "It was wonderful working with our directors Pete and Kemp," says Bassett. "It's a long process, it takes a number of years. Every time I came back to record again, their enthusiasm was infectious, I could sense their passion for the story.

"I was intrigued that it was a story about the soul, about the spirit, about who we are at our core, about what we hope to do with our lives," continues Bassett. "I thought it was really unique. Being a lover of jazz, wishing I could play piano or guitar or some instrument, I was really thrilled to play this character."

"We Mystics meet in this glorious landscape every Tuesday."

MOONWIND is the product of a midlife awakening, which led his former self to change his name and his day job to seek a happier life. Moonwind is now a devoted sign twirler on a Manhattan street corner—an activity that brings him joy, putting him into the zone, which allows him to mentally and spiritually journey to a mystical place called The Astral Plane (near The Great Before), where he rescues lost souls from their uninspiring, stressful lives.

According to producer Dana Murray, there's a reason Moonwind knows so much about lost souls. "He was once a lost soul himself when he spent too much time playing video games," she says. "But he left that life behind to seek true meaning as part of a group called Mystics Without Borders. They find souls lost in dream fields and help them reconnect with their bodies."

Graham Norton was called on to voice Moonwind. "He was such a source of inspiration," says Brownbill. "He delivers a great level of intensity and you want to put that in both his Earth form and when we see him in The Astral Plane. He's a bit softer in the soul world, but with a similar personality."

Brownbill adds that animators used hundreds of sign-twirling videos to get Moonwind's Earthly gig right. "You'd be surprised how many videos exist," she says. "It was pretty funny."

THE COUNSELORS at The Great Before—there are a number of them—are all known as Jerry. Cheery, optimistic and (mostly) all-knowing, the ubiquitous Counselors run The You Seminar very much like camp counselors, wrangling dozens of new human souls, awarding them unique personalities and helping them find their spark and graduate to Earth. Each Jerry is a unique expression of the universe itself—employing patience, good cheer and passive-aggressive tendencies in different measures. But all maintain boundless enthusiasm for their metaphysical charges.

"They're like kindergarten teachers filled with immeasurable patience to herd these souls through the chaos of The You Seminar," says co-screenwriter Mike Jones.

The look of the counselors did not come easily. According to animation supervisor Bobby Podesta, the Counselors' own description raised the bar. "They describe themselves as the universe dumbing itself down for humans to be able to comprehend," says Podesta. "We started with inspiration, drawing from dozens of sources like Swedish sculpture, nature and event light. The art department began exploring, drawing countless forms until a form that felt most recognizable as a character yet malleable enough to almost anything emerged. That character was made up of, believe it or not, a line—a living line."

Story artist Aphton Corbin says the idea was born in the story room during a brainstorm. "They were both two-dimensional and *three*-dimensional," she says. "I did these drawing turnarounds—what if their faces looked different from different angles?"

Pixar artists Deanna Marsigliese and Jerome Ranft created a 3-D version of the imagery in wire, showcasing what the characters might look like from different angles and in varying forms. "Just as the art department explored the possibilities of what the counselors could be, the animators did the same," says Podesta. "Our animators drew on their backgrounds as artists to craft a visually stunning performance."

To help animators execute the unique artistry, says character supervisor Michael Comet, his team created additional controls for animators. “We developed some new technology that creates a new type of curve and allows them to turn on and off each individual control point. They can get these very smooth shapes, add a hand or a thumb or all of the fingers; they have controls that allow them to sharpen or add an angle.”

Adds Podesta, using an oft-quoted Pixar mantra, “The art was challenging the technology and the technology was inspiring the art.”

According to executive producer Dan Scanlon, the end result exemplified the power of teamwork and the way Pixar continues to surprise viewers—even him. “The team went to great lengths to create characters that defied logic, yet were still overflowing with charm and personality. The first time I saw a screening of the film that featured the wiry three-dimensional You Seminar characters in motion, myself and other people in the theater audibly gasped. I’d never seen that type of 2-D animation done in 3-D that way before, and seeing something you’ve never seen before is why I go to movies.”

There are five counselors, all called Jerry. Providing the voices of the Jerrys are Alice Braga, Richard Ayoade, Wes Studi, Fortune Feimster and Zenobia Shroff.

“The Count’s Off.”

TERRY is a peculiar extension of the team of The Great Before, charged with the singular duty of keeping track of the entrants to The Great Beyond. Each Jerry does their best to tolerate Terry, whose obsession with The Count can be burdensome—especially when it’s off. So, when Joe Gardner takes a detour to The Great Before, Terry is determined to make things right.

“Terry takes herself way too seriously,” says co-director Kemp Powers. “I suspect she was supposed to be a Counselor, but the Jerrys wanted very little to do with her, so they gave her this very specific job to keep her busy.”

Rachel House lends her voice to Terry. “I’m so enamored by her,” says producer Dana Murray. “She turned out to be the perfect antagonist.”

“Honestly, your class was the only reason I went to school at all.”

CURLEY is one of Joe Gardner’s former students who nurtured his own passion for music into adulthood, landing a coveted spot in Dorothea Williams’ jazz quartet. The accomplished drummer never forgot his favorite teacher-slash-jazz pianist, so when an opportunity for a piano player arises, Curley gets Joe the audition of a lifetime.

Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson voices Curley—but that’s not where his work on the film ended. “Questlove contributed in a big way when it came to music,” says producer Dana Murray. “He’s like an encyclopedia when it comes to music.”

Says Questlove, “One of my proudest moments with being involved in this entire production was that they came to me asking for music advice. My answer, as I do with anyone, is I make playlists. I made them a bunch of playlists of songs I felt would be played in the background.

“For the barbershop scene—I felt like classic ’90s hip-hop,” continues Questlove. “In an establishment like a barbershop, the proprietor of that business might be 30 or 40 years old. They tend to stick with what they embraced when they were 15 to 23—so when you go into those establishments, you hear music from 20, 25 years ago. I’m the king of nostalgia. Any excuse to make a playlist—I’m your guy.”

DEZ is Joe’s longtime barber and professional listener. Friendly with a warm smile and sense of humor, Dez has known Joe for years. He gladly lets his client talk about anything he wants—which for Joe, of course, is jazz.

“Dez is someone who can be happy doing anything,” says story lead Trevor Jimenez. “He’s more than a barber. There’s artistry to what he does, and he brings joy to the people in his life.”

Donnell Rawlings lends his voice to Dez. “He’s a comedian,” says Murray. “We loved his voice—the grittiness. It fit really well with the character design.”

PAUL is the neighborhood cynic who’s often seen at the local barbershop. While he often butts heads with Joe, Paul generally has something negative or sarcastic to say about most anyone who enters the shop—that is, if anyone even listens to what he says.

Daveed Diggs provides the voice of Paul, and also served as a cultural consultant for the film. “I was one of many people who came to see the early versions of the film and give my thoughts,” says Diggs. “They had long discussions—and every word would get written down; follow-up questions would be asked. It was really impressive to see the care with which they tried to craft this piece and to make sure that they heard from a wide variety of people.

“They were dedicated to making Joe very real,” Diggs continues. “Everybody in the film could be real people. There are so many ways to be Black. In animation, you risk creating something that feels like a caricature and saying: ‘This is Black.’ But there’s a real diversity of experience in this movie.”

MR. MITTENS is a therapy cat spends who spends his days purring, cuddling and comforting patients in their hospital rooms. The cozy cat is enlisted to assist Joe Gardner when he’s hospitalized after an unfortunate fall. Despite a job well done, Mr.

Mittens ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time, embarking on an unexpected adventure.

According to animation supervisor Bobby Podesta, Pixar invited a specialist to come in and talk about cat anatomy and locomotion. “We learned that they’re extremely flexible—they can do a lot with their arms and wrists,” he says. “Mr. Mittens never moves in a way a cat can’t move. That was important to us to ground the character.”

One of the challenges with Mr. Mittens was simulating the creature in the hospital environment. According to simulation supervisor Tiffany Erickson Klohn, the hospital sequence—with dynamic cords, curtains, blankets, a pillow and a furry vest-clad cat—was complicated. “The scene was stylized—it wasn’t meant to be clean and perfect—the blanket was wrinkled and messy and textural, with a cat walking on top of it. We combined volumetric, skin, cloth and hair simulation to make these elements interact, and added a little belly jiggle.”

“I’m an irritable wall flower who’s dangerously curious.”

NEW SOULS are fresh-faced, violet-eyed and curious—they’re blank slates on a mission to discover their identity. From the Personality Pavilions to the Hall of Everything, new souls take on the traits they will exude on Earth. Finding their spark is the final step for all new souls before earning their Earth Pass and beginning life as a human. For some new souls, however, finding that spark is easier said than done.

“New souls are freshly born of the Universe, so these souls are the smallest,” says production designer Steve Pilcher. “They’re designed to look baby-like with less distinguishable features than mentor souls as they have not experienced life on Earth in a body. They have a simple lightbulb-like shape and no permanent arms or legs.”

The simple concept is deceiving, however, adds Pilcher. “All souls are somewhat semi-opaque and soft focused to suggest an ethereal, soft, vaporous, transcendent, spiritual quality to their forms,” he says. “Although they are simple in design, they are quite sophisticated in surface, lighting and FX.”

Filmmakers didn’t want characters in The Great Before to look like ghosts. Director of photography Ian Megibben teamed up with Pilcher and a group of artists to figure out what that would look like and how to achieve it. “More than ever, we had technical directors from different disciplines—effects, character department, sets and lighting—come together to figure out how to make these characters work,” says Megibben. “We looked at rainbows and prisms, rocks and minerals, and opalescent glass.”

The end result is a prismatic character that is well-suited for the world it inhabits. “When light is intercepted by the form of the character,” says Pilcher, “you’ll see warm light—red, oranges, yellows—passing through, it’ll meet the cool side, the shadowed side, which is a deep ultramarine blue. When the colors meet in the middle they blend beautifully.”

One challenge arose, however, as a result of the characters' soft edges. Filmmakers realized there would be some circumstances in which they'd want to enhance readability. "We developed a new technology that basically does edge detection," says character supervisor Michael Comet. "Animators had controls to display hand lines in cases where it's in front of another character or making contact."

The crowds team also faced challenges. "We had to figure out how to deal with large groups of these volumetric characters," says crowds technical supervisor Michael Lorenzen. "There was a lot of technology developed to make it all work. Volumes are a lot heavier to render; they take a lot more rendering time. We made some changes under the hood in terms of how they're processed."

MENTORS are called on in The Great Before to help new souls find their spark. The Counselors have been matching mentors with new souls for generations. "They've worked with the likes of Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Aristotle, Copernicus, Marie Antoinette—there are others, too," says story lead Trevor Jimenez. "They can take them to the Hall of You, where a mentor shows his or her life to inspire the new souls."

Typically, the mentors—in all of their wisdom and life experience—are able to usher the new souls safely and happily to Earth. But one new soul—22—isn't as cooperative, of course, despite assistance from a host of mentors. When Joe Gardner finds himself in The Great Before, he is mistaken for a mentor and ultimately matched with 22.

"We generally singled out a couple of distinguishable features like hair shape or something they wore on earth to separate the mentors from new souls," says Pilcher, who adds that a mentor's life experience also affords them their Earthly eye color, arms and legs.

LOST SOULS wander in The Astral Plane while their Earthly selves struggle to break free of obsession. "Some people get caught up in something that isn't necessarily bad—cooking, video games, art," says director Pete Docter. "But if you do it to the exclusion of everything else in life, you might become a lost soul."

Adds co-director Kemp Powers, "When a lost soul is healed and reconnected with his or her body, the person on Earth basically has an epiphany. It's like a new emotional lease on life."

According to Pilcher, the look of the lost souls represents a restrictive self-imposed psychological prison. "They are enveloped in the dark-blue sand-like stardust that makes up The Astral Plane," says Pilcher. "The soul becomes encased in a shell-like form—larger and somewhat sluggish, preventing its true free purpose of expression."

Character supervisor Junyi Ling says they worked with the sets and lighting teams to develop a sand shader for the lost souls. “The material is somewhat translucent and glittery with an otherworldliness to it,” says Ling. “It’s sub-surface scattering—they almost have a spark to it. We wanted the sparkle to be visually consistent.”

BIG CITY AND BEYOND

Filmmakers Create Two Distinct Worlds: From Gritty, Savvy New York City to the Ethereal Cosmic Realms

“Soul” is set in two fully realized worlds: New York City and the wholly-imagined world of The Great Before. “In many ways, we created two distinct movies,” says producer Dana Murray. “Each had to be fully developed with its own style. These worlds are so completely different—hectic big city and ethereal imagined land—and yet, they will both take your breath away.”

Director Pete Docter opted for the cinematic 2.39 aspect ratio for “Soul,” marking the first of his films to do so. “He was excited by the compositional and cinematic possibilities that the widescreen aspect ratio afforded him,” says director of photography Matt Aspbury. “He felt that the vast expanse of The Great Before would be best showcased that way.”

“This is New York City! You don’t stop in the middle of the street. Go, go, go!”

NEW YORK CITY

Filmmakers sought to set “Soul” in a recognizable city to ground that part of the film. “As soon as we landed on jazz, we started to explore New York City,” says Docter. “Though jazz didn’t originate there, New York is the jazz capital of America. It is a center of culture, full of immigrants and influences from around the world. It’s a rich and vibrant place to feature a film.”

According to co-director Kemp Powers, the Big Apple’s connection to jazz was powerful. “Jazz is a uniquely American art form, and New York City has one of the strongest histories of jazz—some of the most famous musicians are known for their performances in New York City.

“But it’s not just about the music,” continues Powers, who grew up in the city. “It’s about the dynamism of that world. ‘Soul’ is a story about the meaning of life and the connections we make with each other. In New York, people are literally bumping up against one another. Diversity is visually evident on every single street. There’s really no place quite like it.”

Powers adds that the way New York City is depicted and the places featured in the film was very important to him. “You can be universal but also incredibly specific,” he says. “It was really important that New York is a great melting pot of a city, but it was also

important that Joe was able to pass through Black spaces—I thought it would contribute to the cultural authenticity of the character and make the whole story come alive."

Filmmakers wanted the New York City buildings to feel authentic, which meant that they couldn't be perfect and pristine. According to production designer Steve Pilcher, the human world had to reflect the New York City experience. "It's solid, physical and reflective with all of its earthly local color," he says. "It's very tactile expressing its history through the beautiful wear and tear of life. Buildings and railings and pavement are weathered by nature and human interaction. Nothing's really perfect in this world. It's very organic and interesting. The contrast between Earth and the Soul world was the guiding principle for all of our visual decision making."

Shading art director Bryn Imagire wanted the age and history of the city to be visible. "We talked about how old a building might be, how many layers of paint it's had in its lifetime, mineral deposits, pigeon droppings—it all adds dimension," she says. "This is about Joe's life and a passage of time—it was really important to get that feeling across in the sets."

The texture, grit and age proved the perfect contrast to The Great Before. Director of photography Matt Aspbury took that contrast into consideration early in the production. "We knew we wanted to shoot the two worlds differently," he says. "We were really inspired by long-lens films from the 1970s for the New York sequences in terms of distortion, aberrations—we liked the look and feel.

"New York is so visually rich and busy," Aspbury continues. "So, we often shot with longer lenses and very shallow depth of field to reduce clutter and ensure that the focus was on our characters."

Aspbury's team used an anamorphic lens package to reflect the look of the classic live-action films that served as inspiration. They introduced chaos to the camera to support the sequences when Joe raced through the city and those shots that showcased the busy, noisy streets.

Indeed, a key element to the city shots was people. "A city like New York needs tons of people moving in unique ways," says crowds technical supervisor Michael Lorenzen. "We came up with little stories about what's happening in the background."

Adds animation crowds supervisor Guillaume Chartier, "We wanted our crowds to be reflective of those in New York City—diverse in every way."

The quantity of background characters called for a big wardrobe. Says simulation supervisor Tiffany Erickson Klohn, "They're the most complex crowds character garments we've ever tailored. We have 208 adult crowds characters, 16 teenagers and four kids. We created about 60 different garments to be used in over 100 unique combinations. We have characters layered with t-shirts, hoodies, long jackets, infinity scarves, long hair—it's a lot."

Filmmakers also infused a little New York attitude into the crowds characters. “There’s a sequence early in the film where Joe is running to get to his audition,” says Chartier. “He has to dodge a bunch of people. I asked Pete [Docter] if he wanted people to react, and he said, ‘No, these are New Yorkers, nothing bothers them.’”

However, according to shading art director Bryn Imagire, many of those scenes still needed to convey a level of chaos. “Even though we often see New Yorkers wearing a lot of black, we really tried to push a lot of color into the costumes,” says Imagire. “That made the movement of the people feel musical to me.”

BARBERSHOP

“There’s no more culturally authentic place in the Black community than the barbershop,” says co-director Kemp Powers. “In many ways, it’s the town center—particularly for Black men. “It’s a place where these men—from all walks of life—come together.”

Filmmakers visited several barbershops to capture the look and feel of this symbolic locale, taking away several observations. “Barbershops tend to be very narrow since space in New York is at a premium,” says sets art director Paul Abadilla. “We also observed one thing that distinguishes barbers from hair stylists: when they work, their clients face away from the mirror—toward the waiting customers, which encourages conversation and heightens that sense of community.”

For Powers, the barbershop scenes also represent a technological milestone. “Pixar Animation Studios has rendered some pretty amazing things in its history—from the fur in ‘Monsters, Inc.’ to the water in ‘Finding Nemo,’” he says. “But on a personal level, the idea of rendering a wonderful array of black hair, which has so many incredible textures and colors, was too enticing an opportunity to not have it be a major set piece for the film.”

LIBBA’S TAILORING SHOP

The relationship between Joe and his mother comes to life in her tailoring shop, highlighted by the honorary aunties. The key environment had to reflect Libba and underscore the storytelling that Libba’s shop supported the family when Joe’s musician father was between gigs. “There’s a lot of history there,” says production designer Steve Pilcher. “Libba’s love of color and craftsmanship with fabric is evident everywhere, as well as her love for tradition and family.”

Adds sets supervisor Jun Han Cho, “We wanted to make sure that the look of her shop made sense culturally. Rich colors, decorative mannequin forms. It also has to be reflective of Libba, so it’s a warmer space. She’s been there a long time—her friends come and hang out. There’s a nice-looking couch and décor that would take someone years to collect and display.”

THE HALF NOTE
Research is an important part of Pixar's films, taking filmmakers to places ranging from landfills to Scotland. "Soul" called for some of their best research to date. "We visited a number of jazz clubs," says Pilcher. "The Half Note is pretty true to scale of the typical size of a jazz club. We didn't want to break the tradition and history and the richness of the clubs. The atmosphere is authentic, but contemporary. It was a pleasure and honor to create portraits of Jazz Greats to place on the walls of the club."

Adds Cho, "We wanted to capture the intimate jazz scene—these really cool basement clubs where you walk downstairs into a small space so you can feel up close with the music."

During Joe's audition at The Half Note, he slips into what he calls "The Zone." Filmmakers had to imagine what that might look like. "It's super subjective," says effects supervisor Bill Watral. "We relied on pictures and paintings to find the look."

According to Watral, the base notes generated deep, dark blue background shapes. "The right hand—all of the arpeggios that he played—are represented by smaller pink geometric shapes that roll around him," says Watral.

JOE'S APARTMENT
The design and décor of Joe's apartment was guided by the character himself. "It's centered around his love of music," says Cho. "He needed a piano, of course, and we built the rest of the apartment around that. There are shelves of LPs, but no TV."

Imagire imagined that Joe's mom helped with the décor, adding animal-print pillows. "It evokes a sense of wildness and mystery," says Imagire. "And it repeats a pattern we see in Dorothea's dress—and she's someone he aspires to emulate."

"The Great Before?"

"Oh, we call it The You Seminar now. Rebranding."

THE GREAT BEFORE
While filmmakers were able to tap into the real-life big city when it came to the New York City scenes in "Soul," The Great Before had to be created from scratch. "Worlds like this are super fun to put together, but super challenging, too, because they could be anything," says director Pete Docter. "It was very important that it was a reflection of the main character and the story we were telling about him. Joe believes he was born to be a musician, so this world was designed to amplify his belief system: souls are given personalities and interests."

Visual effects supervisor Michael Fong says the filmmakers initially used words like impressionistic and ethereal to describe the world. "We didn't fully know what this meant or what the world would look like in the beginning—it took a lot experimenting and exploring," says Fong. "Then we discovered we could make impressionistic and ethereal environments by generating soft forms from combinations of volumes, particles

and line work. The filmmakers loved how the soft edges of the objects seem to blend into one another."

According to production designer Steve Pilcher, the key to the look of the world was a particular kind of softness. “Almost everything has a degree of blur on it,” he says. “There’s something that looks like grass, but it’s not really grass. It’s soft and almost featherlike—translucent in the way it moves. Everything is very soft and ethereal and somewhat transparent. It is predominantly a very pastel palette, somewhat desaturated.”

Docter’s signature imagination is fully represented in the world. “You can tell from Pete’s previous films like ‘Up’ and ‘Inside Out’ that he loves animation and loves pushing the boundaries of what it can do,” says executive producer Dan Scanlon. “But with ‘Soul,’ he and his team strived to go further than ever before. They wanted to show audiences a world they’d never seen before in the form of the You Seminar. For Pete and his team showing something new was more about restraint than about adding all the bells and whistles. The world is very deceptively simple, big bold beautiful shapes, abstract buildings that look like none you’ve ever seen on Earth. It takes guts to try to communicate an idea with less, but if it’s done right it can end up saying a lot more.”

Sets supervisor Jun Han Cho says that starting from scratch to build a world is both exciting and overwhelming. “If we wanted a hill, we’d have to stop and ask, ‘what is the hill made out of?’” he says. “We couldn’t rely on grass or dirt—it’s made out of something else and we needed to figure out what that was. Is it shiny? What color is it? It’s like inventing a whole new language.”

At the same time, filmmakers wanted to make this world subtly recognizable to moviegoers. “We have our versions of trees, buildings, grass,” says Cho. “That kind of familiarity grounds people so they can better understand what this place is supposed to be.”

In contrast to New York City sequences, director of photography Matt Aspbury utilized a spherical lens package for The Great Before. Camera movement was also choreographed to support the feeling they wanted to convey. “Pete [Docter] wanted it to feel very serene—a controlled, ethereal environment,” says Aspbury. “Everything is soft. The camera reflects that in a way that’s very floaty—almost weightless.”

Filmmakers consulted with acclaimed cinematographer Bradford Young. “One of the things I urged everyone to connect to in terms of camera was to create some visual homage to the music,” says Young. “You’ve got to be free and vulnerable.”

According to director of photography Ian Megibben, the lighting was inspired by the new souls themselves. “We try to evoke the idea of dawn—new day,” says Megibben. “It always has this perpetually early morning look to it—very high key, very bright and colorful pastels.

“It is made up of materials that are not hard surfaces,” Megibben continues. “Everything is soft. We used a mish-mash of rendering techniques to get this ethereal volumetric look.”

Also known as The You Seminar, The Great Before is home base to the Counselors who are diligently working to arm the new souls with everything they need to go to Earth. Located within The You Seminar are a host of destinations visited by new souls.

“First off is the Excitable Pavilion. You four, in you go! You five will be aloof. And you two. Why not?”

PERSONALITY PAVILIONS

Personality Pavilions are individual buildings where new souls go to get their personalities. According to sets art director Paul Abadilla, each pavilion is an abstract representation of the personality trait. “We leave some of them up to interpretation, because there are so many possibilities,” says Abadilla. “But our hero pavilions use iconic shapes—the Aloof Pavilion, for example, looks like a nose pointed up in the air. It’s a quick read that’s supported by the characters’ performances.”

HALL OF YOU

The Hall of You is where mentors are able to share their life stories with new souls. The environment is designed to mimic a museum, complete with imagery and vignettes depicting key moments in a mentor’s history.

HALL OF EVERYTHING

The Hall of Everything is a collection of everything on Earth that inspires new souls in search of their spark. Says Pilcher, “We bleached the color in the Hall of Everything—where souls go to interact with possible interests. Everything there is recognizable, but there’s no color in it unless you interact with it.”

“It’s supposed to be the interpretation of what the counselors think the human world is like,” adds Michael Fong, visual effects supervisor.

ASTRAL PLANE

Adjacent to The You Seminar, the Astral Plane is where Mystics Without Borders actively try to save lost souls. “The terrain is inspired by kinetic sand,” says Abadilla. “Everything in the soul universe is made up of this sparkly particulate material. While The You Seminar is more mathematically constructed, the Astral Plane is more organic.”

The astral sand needed to move in a specific way, particularly as Moonwind’s ship sailed through it. Enter effects supervisor Bill Watral and his team. “The idea behind the whole place is that it’s a mental construct of what you think it is when you’re there—it can be anything,” says Watral. “As the boat pushes the sand, it moves in a physical way that’s not based in reality and freezes, taking on the shapes of the surrounding environment. We also authored a sparkle pass for everything. We carefully control where those sparkles are around the world.”

IN THE ZONE

Filmmakers Call on Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross to Create a Soaring Score, and Jon Batiste for Jazz

“If you go back and look at some of the early sound animated films,” says director Pete Docter, “there is a real connection there with jazz music. It's rhythmic, it's interesting to listen to, and it is real. I always feel like there's a great joy when you hear something and see it synchronized at the same time. I think that was what attracted some of the early animation artists to jazz, because they realized how well it would synchronize with what they were trying to do visually.”

As Docter and filmmakers at Pixar Animation Studios were developing “Soul,” they weren’t sure at first what Joe would pursue with such passion. “We needed something that Joe could do that showed the promise of life, something that we’d all root for,” says Docter. “What if he’s a scientist or a businessman? And then almost by fate, we found this video from an online MasterClass by jazz legend Herbie Hancock.”

“I had the greatest experience of working with Miles Davis,” said Hancock in the video, “where I played something that was, you could say, technically wrong. And it was in the middle of a concert that was the best concert of that tour. We were having a great time. And in the middle of one of the songs, during Miles’ song, I played this chord that was so wrong. I thought I had just destroyed everything and reduced that great night to rubble. Miles took a breath and he played some notes and he made my chord right. And I could not figure out how he did that—it sounded like magic. It took me years to figure out what actually happened. Here’s what happened: I judged what I had played—Miles didn’t. Miles just accepted it as something new that happened. And he did what any jazz musician should always try to do, and that is try to make anything that happens into something of value.”

“When we heard that,” says Docter, “we thought that not only was it a great story, but a perfect metaphor for life. We thought jazz is really the perfect representation. Joe has to be a jazz musician.”

While music is always an important part of Pixar’s films—think Randy Newman and the “Toy Story” films, or “Coco,” 2017’s love letter to Mexico—it instantly became an integral part of the storytelling of “Soul.”

Filmmakers, committed to representing the beloved music genre authentically, enlisted professionals from the world of jazz including Hancock, Daveed Diggs, Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson and American jazz drummer, composer, producer and educator Terri Lyne Carrington. “They already had so much of it right in the script when I first joined,” says Carrington. “I really wanted the film to capture the joy of the music, the joy of the musicians. So often pain and struggle is affiliated with the blues, jazz and even

modern Black music, so it was nice to see that their take on it really captured the joyous part."

The two worlds created in "Soul" called for two distinct styles of music that help shape and define each world. Globally renowned musician and GRAMMY® nominee Jon Batiste provided the original jazz compositions and arrangements for the film and Oscar® winners Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross ("The Social Network"), from Nine Inch Nails, created an original score that will drift between the real and soul worlds.

JON BATISTE

"I grew up with Peanuts cartoons and the Vince Guaraldi music," says Docter. "I feel like it's coursing through my veins, and this is our version of that. Jon Batiste is a fantastic musician—he's a historian yet is able to push the music forward, bringing all these different influences to the work. I sincerely hope that the jazz music in 'Soul' will inspire a whole new generation."

According to Batiste, the music was written with that in mind. "All the compositions are influenced by a large swath of the hundred-plus years of jazz music, which gives the listener a lot of reference points," says Batiste. "It's a subtle way to pay homage while also introducing a whole new audience to these types of sounds."

Batiste curated a multigenerational band of musicians spanning four generations, including living legends like the 95-year-old drummer Roy Haynes, who played with Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong, among others, as well as some of the most accomplished young musicians in the world today. "Putting the band together like this was important to me because it gives the sessions a richness of lineage and mythical depth," says Batiste. "The passing of the torch."

Co-director Kemp Powers found this old-is-new approach appealing. "Some people can think of jazz as an old artform," says Powers. "What I love about Jon Batiste's attitude is when you talk about jazz to him, he says jazz is the newest kind of music there is. You are literally creating it as you're playing it, and there's nothing newer than that."

Batiste naturally related to the main character. "As an innately musical person, I find myself constantly listening to and analyzing my environment through the context of music, even when not performing," he says. "Joe has this quality as well. Joe eventually learns that there is more to life than music. I relate to that too and recall how very important it was for me to learn this as a young musician. It had a profound impact on me. What we play is life, and we have to relish life in order for it to come out of the instrument."

When it came to recording the cues, Batiste's talent shone. "He'd play something that for whatever reason didn't feel quite right," says editor Kevin Nolting. "Pete would talk to him, and within seconds he'd take the same cue and make it sound completely perfect for the movie."

TRENT REZNOR & ATTICUS ROSS

“Soul” marks the first time Reznor and Ross have composed music for an animated film. But their approach was not unlike their work on other films. Says Reznor, “Our first step is always to listen and really try to understand where the filmmakers are coming from—what they’re seeing, what they’re imagining. We spent a lot of time discussing how you’re supposed to feel when you’re first exposed to the ‘Soul’ world. Then we went back to our studio, which is filled with a variety of real, imagined and synthetic instruments, and spent the first chunk of time experimenting with different arrangements and different instruments and seeing what felt emotionally right to create the fabric of this world.”

According to Ross, they wanted to help differentiate the areas of that world. “There’s The Great Before, The Great Beyond, The Astral Plane, The You Seminar,” he says. “Every place needed its own identity.”

To create the right sound, the artists turned to synthesizers but treated everything as if they were traditional instruments. “We multitrack recorded them as if we were scoring with an orchestra,” says Reznor. “We came up with a few techniques over the years that take sounds that aren’t of this Earth necessarily, yet they feel warm and organic and natural.”

According to Docter, their unique approach was exactly what the film needed. “We wanted the score for this film to be different from any other Pixar film,” he says. “We were excited to work with Trent and Atticus because we knew they would bring us places we’d never gone before. Their unique approach to sound and creative thinking made them really inspiring to work with.”

BUILDING THE PERFORMANCES

Jazz is such an important aspect of “Soul” that filmmakers wanted to ensure that all of the performances are authentic. The effort involved several departments and hundreds of hours of work to pull it off in a way that would win the approval of jazz musicians.

Extensive reference footage was taken, using multiple camera angles, including close-ups of the musician’s hands playing piano keys and the saxophone, as well as the bass and drums. “For each of those shots—several were thousands of frames long—we delivered a lot of coverage to editorial,” says director of photography Matt Aspbury.

Adds producer Dana Murray, “The authenticity we were able to achieve with Joe on piano and Dorothea on saxophone was one of the highlights of the whole show. You get lost in the performances, lost in the music—which, in many ways, is the whole point.”

ABOUT THE VOICE CAST

JAMIE FOXX (voice of Joe Gardner) is an award-winning actor, singer and comedian. Foxx recently won outstanding supporting actor in a motion picture at the NAACP Image Awards, and received a SAG Award® nomination for outstanding performance by a male actor in a supporting role for his riveting performance in “Just Mercy” for Warner Bros.

Foxx can currently be seen in Netflix’s “Project Power,” which launched on August 14. Foxx is producing and set to star in “They Cloned Tyrone” and is executive producing and starring in Netflix’s father/daughter comedy series “Dad Stop Embarrassing Me,” which is based on his relationship with his oldest daughter, Corinne Foxx, who also produces the series.

It was recently announced that Foxx has an overall deal with Sony Pictures Entertainment to develop and produce feature films.

TINA FEY (voice of 22) continues to be applauded for the iconic and groundbreaking seven-season run as the executive producer, head writer and star of NBC's three-time (2007, 2008, 2009) Emmy®-winning, one-of-a-kind comedy series, “30 Rock.” Her performances as Liz Lemon earned Fey an Emmy, two Golden Globes®, four SAG Awards® and a People's Choice Award. In 2009, “30 Rock” was nominated for a record 22 Emmy Awards, the most ever of any comedy series on television in a single season. From 2012 to 2013, it received a total of 13 nominations for its final season, six of which were individual nominations for Fey.

Prior to creating “30 Rock,” Fey completed nine seasons as head writer, cast member and co-anchor of the "Weekend Update" segment on “Saturday Night Live.” Fey is an Emmy winner and two-time Writers Guild Award winner for her writing on “Saturday Night Live” and won an Emmy in 2009 for guest appearance by an actress in a comedy series for her portrayal of Sarah Palin on the 2008-2009 season of “SNL.” Fey also made Emmy history in 2016 when she and Amy Poehler became the first joint winners of best comedy series guest actress for their “SNL” co-hosting appearance.

Fey expanded to feature films in Spring 2004 as both a screenwriter and an actress in the hit comedy “Mean Girls,” which earned her a nomination for a Writers Guild Award for best adapted screenplay. On the big screen, Fey starred opposite Amy Poehler in the film “Baby Mama” for Universal Pictures, which exceeded the $50-million mark at

the U.S. box office. In 2010, Fey starred in 20th Century Fox's film “Date Night” opposite Steve Carell, and was a featured voice in the DreamWorks animated film “Megamind.”

In April 2011, Fey released her first book entitled “Bossypants,” which topped the New York Times bestseller list, remaining for 39 consecutive weeks, and received a GRAMMY® nomination for best spoken word album. “Bossypants” was released in paperback in January 2012 and has sold more than 3.75 million copies.

In 2015 Fey and writing partner Robert Carlock co-executive produced and created the hit Netflix original comedy “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” starring Ellie Kemper. The series was nominated in the best comedy category for the 67th Primetime Emmy Awards, boasting four nominations for the talented cast, including a guest actress nod for Fey. After four successful seasons, the show wrapped the first-ever comedy interactive special “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy vs The Reverend” for Netflix, an exciting conclusion to the series. The special was released on Netflix on May 12**.** In 2018, Fey's Broadway adaptation of “Mean Girls” opened at the August Wilson Theatre. Directed by Casey Nicholaw, and with music written by her husband Jeff Richmond, the show received 12 Tony® Award nominations, including best book by Tina Fey.

Fey is working on NBC’s “Untitled Mayor Project,” which she is writing and executive producing with Carlock. Fey and Carlock are also executive producing “Girls5Eva,” a comedy series for NBCU’s upcoming streaming platform Peacock. Netflix has also ordered 20 episodes of the animated comedy series “Mulligan,” which Fey is executive producing alongside the show’s writers Carlock and Sam Means and Universal Television. “Mulligan” marks the third show Fey has in development with NBCUniversal.

Fey lives in New York with her husband, Jeff Richmond, and their two daughters.

GRAHAM NORTON (voice of Moonwind) is one of the UK’s best loved presenters, and has picked up almost every TV award going, including numerous BAFTAs, National Television Awards and International Emmys®. His tenure as the UK’s premiere chat show host started on Channel 4 in the late ’90s with “So Graham Norton” and “V Graham Norton,” and continues now on BBC1 with “The Graham Norton Show.” Since moving to the BBC, he has hosted numerous hit shows including the BAFTA Film Awards, the BAFTA Television Awards, “Elton John: Uncensored,” “Adele at the BBC,” “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria,” “Any Dream Will Do,” “I'd Do Anything” and “Let It Shine.” He’s been hosting the iconic “Eurovision Song Contest” for over a decade, and continues to host his own Saturday morning show on BBC Radio 2, now the highest rated single radio show in Europe. Most recently, Graham appeared as a judge on the smash hit “Ru Paul's Drag Race UK” (BBC).

As a writer, Norton has written two hugely successful memoirs. His debut novel “Holding” was released to critical acclaim and huge commercial success in 2016, and his second, “A Keeper,” was a Sunday Times Bestseller and was shortlisted for the

National Book Awards. His third novel, “Home Stretch” was published at the start of October.

RACHEL HOUSE / Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mutunga (voice of Terry) is one of New Zealand’s most highly regarded actors. She has had a long and celebrated career both locally and internationally on stage, TV and film. Highlights of her career include “Moana,” “Thor,” “Boy,” “Hunt for the Wilderpeople” and “Penguin Bloom.” She is also a celebrated voice artist having starred in “Sherwood,” “The Lion Guard” and “Underground Uglies.”

As an acting coach she has also worked alongside Jane Campion for “Top of the Lake” and “Power of the Dog,” and with Taika Waititi for “Boy,” “Hunt for the Wilderpeople,” “Jojo Rabbit” and “Next Goal Wins.”

House is also an award-winning theatre director most notably for the Māori version of “Troilus and Cressida” performed at the Globe Theatre in London. She studied at Prague film school where she won best director and the audience award for her two short films. House has directed commercials for ASB with Curious films and Auckland Transport with Adrenalin road safety “Yeah, nah” commercials aimed specifically at young Māori, which she also wrote. These super low-budget commercials went viral, garnering over a million hits.

House has also been awarded an Arts Laureate, NZOM, Mana Wahine (WIFT) and Te Waipuna a rangi (Matariki awards) as an actor and director.

ALICE BRAGA (voice of Jerry) is a Brazilian actress and activist known for her standout roles in films such as “City of God,” “Blindness,” and in television for her reprising role as Teresa Mendoza in USA Network’s “Queen of the South.” She currently stars in Luca Guadagnino’s HBO television series “We Are Who We Are” alongside Chloë Sevigny, Jack Dylan Grazer, Faith Alabi, Spence Moore II, Corey Knight, Tom Mercier and Sebastiano Pigazzi. The eight-episode series is one of HBO’s prestige dramas of the fall television season. On the big screen, Braga was most recently seen in the 20th Century Studios thriller “The New Mutants,” directed by Josh Boone alongside an ensemble cast including Charlie Heaton, Anya Taylor Joy, Maisie Williams and Blu Hunt. Next year, Braga will be seen starring in “The Suicide Squad,” which is slated for a late summer 2021 release.

Other notable TV and film credits include Stuart Hazeldine’s “The Shack,” alongside Sam Worthington, Octavia Spencer and Tim McGraw; Kieran-Darcy Smith’s “The Duel,” co-starring opposite Woody Harrelson and Liam Hemsworth; David Mamet's “Redbelt” alongside Chiwetel Ejiofor and Emily Mortimer; Wayne Kramer's “Crossing Over,” in an ensemble cast led by Sean Penn and Harrison Ford; Francis Lawrence’s blockbuster success film, “I Am Legend,” opposite Will Smith; Neill Blomkamp’s futuristic drama “Elysium” opposite Matt Damon, Jodie Foster and Sharlto Copley; Walter Salles’ “On

the Road" based on the book by Jack Kerouac with Kristen Stewart, Kirsten Dunst, Amy Adams and Garrett Hedlund; Mikael Hafstrom's thriller "The Rite" opposite Anthony Hopkins; Miguel Sapochnik's thriller "Repo Men" opposite Jude Law and Forest Whitaker; Nimrod Antal's film "Predators" opposite Adrien Brody; Carlos Bolado's "Only God Knows" (Sólo Dios Sabe), opposite Diego Luna; as well as the riveting drama "Lower City" (Cidade Baixa).

An activist for climate change, Braga works closely with the organization Greenpeace helping fight the fight for a greener, healthier world for our oceans, forests, food and democracy. Braga is fluent in Portuguese, Spanish and English.

RICHARD AYOADE (voice of Jerry) is a multiple award-winning comedian, actor, writer and director. The success of Garth Marenghi's "Dark Place," which he co-wrote, directed and starred in, was followed by his BAFTA award-winning role in "The IT Crowd" and numerous other TV credits including "The Mighty Boosh."

Ayoade wrote and directed the BAFTA-nominated film "Submarine" and wrote and directed "The Double" starring Jesse Eisenberg. He presented "Travel Man" and "The Crystal Maze" for Channel 4 and has released three books, "Ayoade on Ayoade" and "The Grip of Film" and "Ayoade on Top," all published by Faber & Faber.

PHYLICIA RASHAD (voice of Libba) is an accomplished actor and stage director who became a household name when she portrayed Claire Huxtable on "The Cosby Show." Her character's enduring appeal has earned her numerous honors and awards for over two decades. Rashad appeared as Carol on NBC's "This Is Us" *(*2020 & 2019 Emmy® nominations*),* Diana Dubois on the popular Fox TV series "Empire," and as Dr. Woods-Trap in Tarell Alvin McCraney's Peabody Award-winning series David Makes Man*,*" on the OWN Network.

While television was a catalyst in the rise of Rashad's career, she has also been a force on the stage, appearing both on and Off-Broadway, often in projects that showcase her musical talent—such as "Jelly's Last Jam," "Into the Woods," "Dreamgirls" and "The Wiz."

In 2016, Rashad was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame and received the 2016 Lucille Lortel Award for outstanding leading actress in a play for her performance as Shelah in Tarell Alvin McCraney's "Head of Passes" at the Public Theater, a role which she reprised at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Rashad performed the role of the Duchess of Gloucester in "Richard II," the 2020 "Shakespeare on the Radio" collaboration between The Public Theater and New York public radio station WNYC. On Broadway, Rashad has performed as Violet Weston in "August Osage County," Big Mama in Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (a role that she reprised on the London stage), Aunt Ester in August Wilson's "Gem of the Ocean," (Tony Award® nomination) and Queen Britannia in Shakespeare's "Cymbeline" at Lincoln Center.

Rashad received both the Drama Desk and the Tony Award for best actress in a play for her riveting performance as Lena Younger in the 2004 Broadway revival of Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun."

Among Rashad's film credits are "Creed" and "Creed II," "Just Wright," and Tyler Perry's "Good Deeds," "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow Is Enuf" and the 2020 release "A Fall From Grace." Upcoming film projects include the Disney and Pixar's "Soul," and the Christmas musical "Jingle Jangle."

Rashad made her critically acclaimed directorial debut at the Seattle Repertory Theater with August Wilson's "Gem of the Ocean." She has also directed Stephen Adly Guirgis' "Our Lady of 121st Street" at the Signature Theatre, "The Roommate" at Steppenwolf Theatre, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" and "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" (2014 NAACP Theatre Award for best director) at the Mark Taper Forum, "Immediate Family" at the Taper and Goodman Theatre, "Fences" at the Long Wharf Theatre and McCarter Theatre, "A Raisin in the Sun" at Ebony Repertory Theatre, Kirk Douglas Theatre and Westport Country Playhouse, and "Four Little Girls" at the Kennedy Center. She will direct an upcoming revival of Charles Randolph Wright's "Blue" in New York in 2021.

Respected in the academic world, Rashad has conducted master classes at many colleges, universities and arts organizations, including Howard University, New York University, Carnegie Mellon, The Black Arts Institute of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting, and the prestigious Ten Chimneys Foundation established at the Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne Estate. Rashad also holds the distinction of being the first recipient of the Denzel Washington Chair in Theatre at Fordham University.

Rashad's commitment to excellence in the performing arts has been recognized by the numerous colleges and universities that have presented her with Honorary Doctorates, including University of South Carolina at Columbia, Brown University, St. Augustine College, Providence College, Barber Scotia College, Clark Atlanta University, Morris Brown College, Carnegie Mellon University, Howard University and Fordham University. Rashad also received an Honorary Doctorate from Spelman College, where First Lady Michelle Obama delivered the 2011 commencement address.

In 2015, Rashad received the BET Honors Theatrical Arts Award, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre's Spirit of Shakespeare Award and the Inaugural Legacy Award of the Ruben Santiago-Hudson Fine Arts Learning Center. Among the other awards that decorate her walls and shelves are the 2018 Will Award from Washington D.C.'s Shakespeare Theatre Company, the 2014 Mosaic Woman Legend Award of Diversity Woman Magazine, The Texas Medal of Arts, The National Council of Negro Women's Dorothy L. Height Dreammaker Award, AFTRA's AMEE Award for Excellence in Entertainment, New York Women in Film and Television's Muse Award for Outstanding Vision and Achievement, Dallas Women in Film Topaz Award, and the Pan African Film Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Rashad serves on a number of prestigious boards, including Brainerd Institute Heritage, which is steering the restoration of Kumler Hall at the historic site of Brainerd Institute in Chester, South Carolina, and DADA, the Debbie Allen Dance Academy. Since 2017, Rashad has been the brand ambassador of the National Trust for Historic Preservation African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. She is also a founding member of Black Theatre United (BTU).

Rashad graduated magna cum laude from Howard University, and is the mother of two adult children.

DONNELL RAWLINGS (voice of Dez) has toured the world performing to sold-out audiences with his show “2Soon with Donnell Rawlings.” He appeared in “The Jay and Silent Bob Reboot” film and starred in Kevin Smith’s 2018 short “Hollyweed.” Rawlings appeared on “The New Negroes” for Comedy Central, on Netflix in “Historical Roasts with Jeff Ross,” and is recurring on the Emmy®-nominated series “It’s Bruno!” Rawlings was on “The Joe Rogan Experience” podcast, and was featured on TBS’ “The Last OG” with Tracy Morgan. He hosted his own show as Judge Rawlings on MTV2’s “Guy Court,” and was also a cast member on MTV2’s “Guy Code.” In 2016, Rawlings showed his range and opened up about his life as a new father in the first season of TLC’s hit show “Project Dad.” He’s traveled the globe performing alongside Dave Chappelle where he got his start as Ashy Larry on “Chappelle’s Show” for Comedy Central.

AHMIR “QUESTLOVE” THOMPSON (voice of Curley)—drummer, DJ, producer, culinary entrepreneur, designer, New York Times best-selling author and member of The Roots—is the unmistakable heartbeat of Philadelphia’s most influential hip-hop group. He is the musical director for “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon,” where his beloved Roots crew serves as house band. Beyond that, this five-time GRAMMY® Award-winning musician’s indisputable reputation has landed him musical directing positions with everyone from D'Angelo to Eminem to Jay-Z.

Questlove has released five books, including the New York Times best seller “Mo’ Meta Blues,” “Soul Train: The Music,” “Dance and Style of a Generation,” the James Beard Award-nominated and AIGA 50 Books | 50 Covers award-winning book “somethingtofoodabout: Exploring Creativity with Innovative Chefs,” the New York Times best seller, and GRAMMY-nominated “Creative Quest,” and his most recently released “Mixtape Potluck.”

Questlove co-produced the GRAMMY Award-winning Original Broadway Cast Recording of “Hamilton” alongside Alex Lacamoire, Bill Sherman, Lin-Manuel Miranda and Tariq “Black Thought” Trotter. Questlove also served as the executive music producer and composer on the A&E miniseries “Roots.”

Questlove and Black Thought of the Roots have executive produced the acclaimed documentary series “Hip-Hop: The Songs That Shook America” on AMC under their production company, Two One Five Entertainment.

Additionally, Questlove will executive produce an upcoming Broadway musical based on “Soul Train,” the iconic music variety show that aired from 1971 to 2006.

Questlove has been a voice in the culinary world as the author of “somethingtofoodabout,” the host of a series of Food Salons with world-renowned and innovative chefs at his Financial District apartment in the NY by Gehry building, and the launch of his new endeavor, Questlove’s Cheesesteak™ made with Impossible™ 2.0 in over 40 Live Nation venues across the country as well as sports & entertainment arenas. He is also an early stage investor in Impossible Foods™, Ocean Huggers™, and Magic Cereal™.

Questlove has appeared as a Guest Judge on “Top Chef” Season 11 and his interest in food and his own culinary endeavors have been featured on the cover of New York Magazine, in Food & Wine magazine, Bon Appetit, and seen on “The View,” “Watch What Happens Live,” and “Late Night with Jimmy Fallon.” He is on the City Harvest Food Council, a board member of Food & Finance High School (Food Education Fund), and on the Advisory Council for the Museum of Food and Drink (MOFAD). Questlove is also a Founding Member of the CAPA Foundation in Philadelphia. He also co-produced and hosted an all-star Food Network special “Questlove’s Potluck,” which raised money for America’s Food Fund during the pandemic.

ANGELA BASSETT (voice of Dorothea Williams) is an actress, director, and executive producer known for captivating, emotionally-tinged performances full of dignity. She has made star-turns in the historic “Black Panther,” “Mission: Impossible-Fallout,” “Bumblebee” from Paramount, “9-1-1” and “Master of None.” Other projects include feature films “Otherhood” from Netflix and “The Flood” from National Geographic, for which she received an Emmy® nomination for outstanding narrator.

Bassett wrapped production on the upcoming action thriller “Gunpowder Milkshake.” Further, she was recently nominated for two Emmys, including outstanding narrator for the “Imagineering Story: The Happiest Place on Earth” and outstanding guest actress in a comedy series for “A Black Lady Sketch Show.” Bassett is the recipient of a Golden Globe® Award and multiple NAACP Image Awards; was nominated for an Academy Award®, two Screen Actors Guild Awards®, six Emmys, and nine BET Awards; and holds a coveted star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. She was nominated for a Directors Guild of America Award for her directorial debut, the Whitney Houston biopic “Whitney.” She also showcased her directing talents in the popular horror anthology series “American Horror Story.”

DAVEED DIGGS (voice of Paul), Tony®- and GRAMMY®-winning actor, rapper and producer, is widely known for originating the dual roles of Thomas Jefferson and Marquis de Lafayette in the Broadway sensation “Hamilton.”

Diggs can be seen starring in TNT’s futuristic thriller series “Snowpiercer” opposite Jennifer Connelly. The series is based on the critically acclaimed movie by “Parasite” director Bong Joon-ho and the graphic novel series of the same name. Set more than seven years after the world has become a frozen wasteland, “Snowpiercer” centers on the remnants of humanity, who inhabit a gigantic, perpetually moving train that circles the globe. Class warfare, social injustice and the politics of survival play out in this riveting television adaptation. The series premieres on May 17, 2020, and is already picked up for a second season.

This summer, Diggs starred opposite Kristen Bell, Josh Gad and Stanley Tucci in Apple TV+’s new animated musical sitcom “Central Park.” The show tells the story of a family of caretakers who live and work in Central Park. The caretakers end up saving the park and essentially the world.

Diggs recently wrapped production on the independent feature “The Starling” opposite Melissa McCarthy, and currently stars opposite Ethan Hawke in Showtime’s “The Good Lord Bird.” He took his award-winning roles of Thomas Jefferson and Marquis de Lafayette to Disney+ earlier this year.

In 2019, Diggs starred opposite Jake Gyllenhaal in the Netflix thriller “Velvet Buzzsaw” and lent his voice to Netflix’s “Green Eggs and Ham,” Amazon’s “Undone” and Disney XD’s “Star Wars Resistance.”

In 2018, Diggs co-wrote, produced and starred in the critically acclaimed Lionsgate feature “Blindspotting,” which Peter DeBruge at Variety called, “the most exciting cinematic take on contemporary race relations since ‘Do the Right Thing’ nearly 30 years ago.” Eric Kohn of IndieWire deemed Diggs, who received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for his performance, “an instant movie star.” Following the film’s success, Diggs is co-writing and executive producing the television spinoff starring Jasmine Cephas Jones, currently in development at Starz.

In 2017, Diggs co-starred in the hit Lionsgate feature “Wonder” opposite Julia Roberts and Jacob Tremblay, in a performance heralded as “irresistibly charming” and “deeply sympathetic.” He also voiced the character Dos in Blue Sky Studios’ animated feature “Ferdinand” opposite Kate McKinnon.

On television, Diggs has lent his voice to Fox’s “Bob’s Burgers,” Apple’s “Edendale” and Netflix’s “BoJack Horseman.” Other television credits include ABC’s Emmy®-nominated series “Black-ish,” Netflix’s hit comedy “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” HBO’s “Tour De Pharmacy,” NBC’s “Law & Order: SVU” and Netflix’s “The Get Down,” created by visionary director Baz Luhrmann. Diggs also executive produced ABC’s “The Mayor” and a variety of digital shorts for ESPN.

Diggs is a member of the West Coast-based experimental hip-hop trio clipping. He has toured nationally and internationally, both as a solo artist and with clipping, playing venues such as the Sonar Festival in Barcelona, Off Festival in Krakow, ATP Iceland in Keflavic, and Brooklyn's AfroPunk Fest. One of the hip-hop trio's songs, "The Deep," was turned into a book from Simon & Schuster and was named one of NPR's best books of 2019. Special engagement bookings include the Red Bull Music Academy and Moog Electronics. The group was also nominated for a Hugo Award for their sophomore album, Splendor & Misery, and Simon & Schuster recently released a novel based on their acclaimed single "The Deep."

WES STUDI (voice of Jerry) credits his passion and multi-faceted background for his powerful character portrayals that forever changed a Hollywood stereotype.

Drawing from his rich life experience, Studi moved audiences with unforgettable performances in "Dances with Wolves," "The Last of the Mohicans," "Geronimo: An American Legend," and "Heat," as well as James Cameron's "Avatar," Paul Weitz's "Being Flynn" and Scott Cooper's "Hostiles." Breaking new ground, he brought fully-developed Native American characters to the screen, and then took his craft a step further highlighting the success of Native Americans in non-traditional roles.

In 2019, Studi received the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Governors Award, an honorary Oscar statuette, given to honor extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement.

In 2018, Studi, a Vietnam Veteran, was invited to present at the 90th Academy Awards. To a viewership of 26.5 million households, he introduced a video montage of military movies as a tribute to our veterans.

Studi was inducted in to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum's Hall of Great Western Performers in 2013. Throughout his 30-year career he's won numerous awards, including several First Americans in the Arts awards and the 2009 Santa Fe Film Festival Lifetime Achievement Award.

Interestingly, acting was never a goal in Studi's youth. Unlike many actors who dive into performing at an early age, he discovered acting later in life.

The eldest son of a ranch hand, Studi was born in 1947 in Nofire Hollow, Okla. He spoke only his native Cherokee until he was 5, when he was enrolled in the Murrell Home to attend public school. He later attended the Chilocco Indian Boarding School in Northern Oklahoma, where he remained through high school graduation. Yet, unlike many fellow Native American students, he never forgot his language.

Studi joined the U.S. Army and while stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., stories from returning Vietnam War veterans set his blood on fire. With only 12 months of his six-year service left,

Studi volunteered to go to Vietnam. He served one tour in South Vietnam with the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta, living his own future war stories. At one point his company was pinned down in the Mekong Delta – and nearly killed – by friendly fire.

After an honorable military discharge, Studi returned home with a fire in the belly, and became seriously involved with Native American politics. He joined the American Indian Movement (AIM) and participated in the Trail of Broken Treaties protest march in 1972, where hundreds of Native American activists marched on Washington. He was one of the protesters who briefly occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs Building there. In 1973, Studi participated in the occupation at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, for which he was arrested.

Studi now sees his political activism as a form of post-Vietnam catharsis. “I began to purge the bad feelings within myself,” he says, adding that he joined the resisters because “I wanted to make myself a viable part of the machinery that affected my people.”

Recognizing his current path could lead to self-destruction, Studi changed course and channeled his feelings toward positive change. Shortly after Wounded Knee, Wes moved to the Tahlequah, Okla., where he worked for the Cherokee Nation, and helped start the Cherokee Phoenix, a bilingual newspaper still in publication today. During that time Studi put his linguistic skills to work and began teaching the Cherokee language in the community. Later attending Northeastern University in Tahlequah, he made further attempts at positive influence in his work with his people.

After college, Studi shifted his attention to running his own horse ranch and became a professional horse trainer. It was during this era that he began acting at The American Indian Theatre Company in Tulsa in 1983, where he found both the adrenaline rush he craved and the cathartic release he needed. “When you’re able to release those feelings in an acting form, it’s healthier than leaving them inside,” he says of discovering acting.

Studi first took the professional stage in 1984 with “Black Elk Speaks” and has never looked back. As his success grew on stage, he expanded to productions for Nebraska Public Television in the summer of 1985. Not long after, he moved to Los Angeles, landing his first film role in “Powwow Highway” and making his TV debut in a small role in the ABC TV-movie “Longarm” in 1988.

In 1990, Wes portrayed a terrifyingly memorable Pawnee warrior in “Dances with Wolves.” Two years later he landed the role of Magua in Michael Mann’s “The Last of the Mohicans,” the performance that put him on the map.

Studi drew on his own combat training, anger and sense of enforced isolation for his riveting depiction of the vengeful Magua. He soon became known for his film roles portraying strong Native American characters as he strove to portray them with poignancy and authenticity.

Studi went on to play the title character in the Walter Hill-directed film “Geronimo: An

American Legend" (1993) alongside veteran actors Gene Hackman and Robert Duvall, for which he won a Western Heritage Award. He also made memorable appearances in such films as "Heat" (1995) as Al Pacino's partner, "Deep Rising" (1998) and "Mystery Men" (1999). In 2002, he brought legendary character Lt. Joe Leaphorn to life for a series of PBS movies produced by Robert Redford and based on Tony Hillerman's books "Skinwalkers," "Coyote Waits," and "A Thief of Time."

In 2018, Studi was invited to present a tribute to military veterans at the 90th Academy Awards. During his presentation, he shared the following in his native Cherokee language: "Hello. Appreciation to all veterans & Cherokees who've served. Thank you!"

Studi's other notable film credits include "The Only Good Indian," which he also produced, James Cameron's Academy Award-winning "Avatar," "Hostiles," "The New World," "Street Fighter," "Seraphim Falls," "Three Priests," and such prestigious television movies as "Crazy Horse," "Comanche Moon," "Streets of Laredo," "Broken Chain," "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" and "Bandland." His television credits include Showtime's "Penny Dreadful," "The Mentalist," "Hell on Wheels," and General Abner in "Kings."

At home, Studi's artistic talent extends well beyond acting. He's a skilled stone carver, working primarily in soapstone and other soft stones. He's also an accomplished musician. Playing bass and guitar he fronts the band Firecat of Discord with his wife, singer Maura Dhu, primarily performing original music. Firecat released their first self-titled CD in 1998, touring the U.S. in 2000. Their music was also featured in the short film Bonnie Looksaway's "Iron Art Wagon," which Studi directed.

Additionally, Studi wrote two children's books, "The Adventures of Billy Bean" and "More Adventures of Billy Bean" for the Cherokee Bilingual/Cross Cultural Education Center. In 2006, Studi was honored with the Golden Boot Award.

Studi remains a passionate activist and academic. He's taken a national leadership role in the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages, acting as the spokesperson for the Santa Fe-based Indigenous Language Institute, and working as a language consultant on several films, including "Avatar" and the PBS documentary "We Shall Remain." He's also active in encouraging the next generation of filmmakers and performers, providing mentorship and participating in apprenticeship programs.

Studi and Maura live in Santa Fe, N.M. They have one son, Kholan. Wes also has a son, Daniel, and a daughter, Leah, from a previous marriage.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

PETE DOCTER (Director/Story & Screenplay by) is the Oscar®-winning director of "Monsters, Inc.," "Up" and "Inside Out," and chief creative officer at Pixar Animation Studios.

Starting at Pixar in 1990 as the studio's third animator, Docter collaborated and helped develop the story and characters for "Toy Story," Pixar's first full-length animated feature film, for which he also was supervising animator. He served as a storyboard artist on "A Bug's Life" and wrote initial story treatments for both "Toy Story 2" and "WALL•E." Aside from directing his three films, Docter also executive produced "Monsters University" and the Academy Award®-winning "Brave."

Docter's interest in animation began at age 8 when he created his first flipbook. He studied character animation at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, Calif., where he produced a variety of short films, one of which won a Student Academy Award®. Those films have since been shown in animation festivals worldwide and are featured on the "Pixar Short Films Collection Volume 2." Upon joining Pixar, Docter animated and directed several commercials, and has been nominated for eight Academy Awards, including best animated feature winners "Up" and "Inside Out," and nominee "Monsters, Inc.," and best original screenplay for "Up," "Inside Out" and "WALL•E." In 2007, "Up" was also nominated for a best picture Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

KEMP POWERS (Co-Director/Story & Screenplay by) began at Pixar Animation Studios in August 2018.

Powers grew up in Brooklyn, NY. He attended both Howard University and the University of Michigan. Prior to Pixar, Powers was an award-winning playwright, television and film screenwriter, and journalist. His play "One Night in Miami…" received three L.A. Drama Critics Circle Awards and four NAACP Theatre Awards, and was nominated for the 2017 Laurence Olivier Award for best new play. He adapted it into a feature film, which is being directed by Academy Award®-winning actress Regina King. He was a writer for the television show "Star Trek: Discovery" and has toured nationally as a storyteller for the Peabody Award-winning series "The Moth."

He resides in Los Angeles and Emeryville, Calif.

DANA MURRAY, p.g.a. (Producer) joined Pixar Animation Studios in June 2001 as a desk production assistant on “Finding Nemo.” She served as the art and technology coordinator on several short films, including “Boundin’,” “One Man Band” and “Lifted.” Murray was a lighting coordinator for “Cars” and held a variety of department manager positions on the Academy Award®-winning feature films “Ratatouille,” “Up” and “Brave.” Murray served as the production manager for the Academy Award-winning film “Inside Out,” and most recently produced her first short film, “LOU,” which released in front of “Cars 3” and was nominated for the Best Animated Short Oscar®. She is the producer on “Soul” with director Pete Docter and co-director Kemp Powers.

Raised in Placerville, Calif., Murray attended Sonoma State University. She resides in Oakland, Calif., with her husband, their two girls and dog, Gracie.

DAN SCANLON (Executive Producer) joined Pixar Animation Studios in September 2001 as a storyboard artist on Pixar’s award-winning feature films “Cars” and “Toy Story 3.” During the initial production stages for both films, he worked closely with the directors to bring their ideas to the screen.

Scanlon went on to co-direct the original short film, “Mater and the Ghostlight,” which is included as one of the bonus features on the “Cars” DVD. In addition to his work at Pixar, he simultaneously wrote and directed the live action film “Tracy,” released in 2009.

Scanlon made his animated feature directorial debut in 2013 with “Monsters University,” which grossed more than $738.9 million worldwide at the box office, and received the 2013 Hollywood Animation Award from the Hollywood Film Awards. He also directed Pixar’s original feature film “Onward,” which released March 6, 2020.

In his role as vice president, creative, Scanlon is involved in key creative decision-making at the studio and consults on films in both development and production. Scanlon will serve as the executive producer on two upcoming unannounced Pixar films.

As a child growing up in Clawson, Mich., Scanlon possessed a love for Warner Bros. cartoons, animated Disney films, and as fate would have it, Pixar short films. His passion inspired him to study film and animation in high school and in college, where he focused on illustration at Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD).

Upon graduating from CCAD, Scanlon began working as an animator and story artist for Character Builders, a 2D animation company that produced feature and commercial work in Columbus, Ohio.

Scanlon resides in San Francisco with his wife Michele, dog Carol and one-eyed cat Chichi.

KIRI HART (Executive Producer) joined Pixar Animation Studios as a creative consultant in January 2019. She is the executive producer and a creative consultant on Disney and Pixar's feature film "Soul." As executive producer, she contributes to story development, strategy, marketing, publishing and consumer products for the film. Hart also serves as a creative consultant on the film, ensuring the story and characters are an authentic reflection of the diverse world.

She has worked in the entertainment industry for 27 years as a story analyst, development executive, producer and writer. After starting her career in 1992 as an assistant in CAA's Literary Department and later at the Ladd Company, she moved to HBO Films as a creative executive developing a slate of original movies. She then spent ten years as a screenwriter and television staff writer, writing projects for Universal, HBO, Showtime and NBC.

Prior to Pixar, Hart was the senior vice president of development at Lucasfilm for six years. She formed the Lucasfilm Story Group, and oversaw the creative development of all "Star Wars" content across film, animated television, publishing, gaming, immersive media and theme parks. While at Lucasfilm, Hart co-produced films "The Last Jedi," "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," and all four seasons of the award-winning animated television series "Star Wars Rebels."

Hart grew up in Los Angeles, Calif., and attended Stanford University. She is a member of Academy of Motion Picture Art and Sciences and the Writers Guild of America. She resides in San Francisco, Calif.

MICHAEL WARCH (Associate Producer) began at Pixar Animation Studios as a production unit manager in June 2001. Prior to his current role as associate producer, Warch worked as a production manager on Academy Award®-winning film "Toy Story 3" and co-production manager on "Incredibles 2." He also worked in the sets, layout, sweatbox, lighting, effects and art departments on Academy Award®-winning films "Finding Nemo," "Ratatouille" and "Inside Out," in addition to "The Good Dinosaur" and "Finding Dory." Warch also served as a co-producer on the SparkShorts film "Loop," and most recently as associate producer on Pixar's upcoming feature film "Soul."

As an associate producer, Warch's primary role consists of managing and planning the overarching production plan for a film. This includes film budget, deployment, designing a global production plan, managing the film's shot quota, and partnering with the director and production designer to ensure that the scope, budget and schedule are in sync.

Raised in Maywood, NJ, Warch attended New York Technical College where he studied culinary arts and restaurant management. After working as a chef for many years, he returned to school and studied filmmaking at San Francisco State University.

Warch resides with his wife in Orinda, Calif.

MIKE JONES (Story & Screenplay by) has been a writer and story consultant to Pixar Animation Studios since June 2013, and joined the studio full-time in March 2017. He has served on the brain trusts of many Pixar films, including “Finding Dory,” “Incredibles 2” and the Academy Award©-winning features “Inside Out,” “Coco” and “Toy Story 4.” He also serves on the story trusts of many Sparkshorts, as well as features in early development. He most recently co-wrote Disney and Pixar’s upcoming feature film “Soul.”

As a senior story and creative artist, Jones works with the director to develop a story in its early stages. Together, they explore characters and character arcs, with Jones writing various script drafts until it’s cohesive. After early development, Jones continues to work with the production departments on the different versions of the reels by rewriting every sequence as needed, consulting on storyboards and advising on editorial assemblies.

Before joining Pixar, Jones was a working screenwriter for 20 years, writing scripts for nearly every major Hollywood studio. Prior to screenwriting, he served on the editorial staffs of Filmmaker Magazine, IndieWire and Variety.

Jones grew up in San Antonio, Texas, and attended NYU Film School. He lived in New York for 16 years before moving to Los Angeles. He resides in Northern California.

TRENT REZNOR and **ATTICUS ROSS (Original Score by)** are behind the original score for “Soul,” marking the first time they composed music for an animated film.

Rezner formed Nine Inch Nails in Ohio in 1988 and, over the next 30 years, proceeded to sell more than 30 million records worldwide. The band’s studio albums include the multi-platinum releases “Pretty Hate Machine” (1989), “The Downward Spiral” (1994) and “The Fragile” (1999), which became the first NIN album to reach No. 1 on the US Billboard 200, a feat mirrored by “With Teeth” (2005). The 1992 EP “Broken” yielded two GRAMMY® Awards and also achieved platinum status.

In 2008, Reznor teamed with Ross, his now-partner in NIN, and began a prolific career in composing music for film. Their first project, David Fincher’s “The Social Network,” earned the pair an Oscar® and a Golden Globe®.

Reznor and Ross have continued to compose music for a diverse array of film and television projects—they were most recently nominated for two Emmys® for their work on the Emmy-nominated HBO limited series “Watchmen.” The score soundtrack was released in three volumes late last year, each coinciding with a major plot point for the show.

Their genre-spanning slate of upcoming scores includes Disney and Pixar’s film “Soul,” which will be available exclusively on Disney+ on Dec. 25, and “Mank,” the biopic

of “Citizen Kane” screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz, which will reunite Reznor and Ross with director David Fincher.

Previously, Reznor and Ross wrote the original score for the American remake of “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,” also directed by Fincher. The 39-track album won a GRAMMY for best score soundtrack for visual media. Reznor and Ross also scored Fincher's 2014 adaptation of Gillian Flynn's novel “Gone Girl.”

In 2016, Reznor and Ross wrote the original score for “Patriots Day,” Peter Berg’s film about the Boston Marathon bombing. Acting as music supervisors for the first time, they teamed up with Gustavo Santaolalla and Mogwai to co-compose the score for “Before the Flood,” a feature documentary from longtime environmental advocate Leonardo DiCaprio and actor/filmmaker/Oscar-winning documentary producer Fisher Stevens (“The Cove,” “Racing Extinction”).

Reznor and Ross collaborated with celebrated documentary filmmaker Ken Burns on the eight-hour 2017 docuseries “The Vietnam War.” In 2018, they composed the original score for the Netflix film “Bird Box,” directed by Susanne Bier and starring Sandra Bullock, John Malkovich, Sarah Paulson and Trevante Rhodes. The duo also contributed original music to “Mid90s,” a coming-of-age film set in the 1990s Los Angeles skate era, which was written and directed by Jonah Hill.

JON BATISTE (Jazz Compositions & Arrangements by) is an American singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, bandleader, record producer, educator and actor. As a teenager, he began self-producing and releasing his music on the internet, as well as performing internationally. His major label debut “Hollywood Africans” was nominated for a GRAMMY® Award for best American roots performance in 2019 and, along with his band Stay Human, he is featured nightly on “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.” His composing and songwriting will be featured in his large scale, genre-melding symphonic work “American Symphony,” set to be performed at Carnegie Hall in 2021.

Born into a long lineage of Louisiana musicians, Batiste received both his undergraduate and Master’s degrees in piano from the Juilliard School. He is currently the music director of The Atlantic, the co-artistic director of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, and is on the board of Sing for Hope.

A Forbes 30 under 30 honoree, Batiste balances a demanding performance schedule—which often includes his signature “love riot” street parades—with public speaking engagements, master classes, brand partnerships and acting roles. He played himself on the HBO series “Treme” and appeared in director Spike Lee’s “Red Hook Summer.”

Batiste has been featured in ad campaigns for Chase Bank, Apple Watch and Lincoln Continental, plus numerous fashion brands, including Coach, Polo Ralph Lauren Black Label, Frye, Kate Spade, Jack Spade Barneys, Nordstrom and H&M. He has worked

with, among others, Bruce Weber and Annie Leibowitz, and his personal style has been profiled in numerous fashion publications, including GQ, Vanity Fair, CR Fashion Book, Esquire and Vogue.

Batiste is committed to the education and mentorship of young musicians. He has led his own Social Music Residency and Mentoring Program sponsored by Chase, as well as master classes throughout the world. He has also led several cultural exchanges, beginning in 2006 while still a teen, with the Netherlands Trust, which brought students from the USA and Holland to perform with him at both The Royal Concertgebouw and Carnegie Hall.

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